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December 16, 2004

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Chair Pro Tem
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Supervisor, Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D. 
Director

FINAL REPORT ON AUGUST 5, 2003 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #3: RISK MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

On September 23, 2003, in response to a motion by Supervisor Molina, during the Department's oral report, your Board approved the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Risk Management Techniques and ordered periodic updates be provided on the following directives:

1. Currently, DCFS is to report back on September 9th their efforts to create a more efficient case file with an efficient file retrieval system. Please consider the model used at MacLaren Children's Center (MCC) where they utilized a Plan of Care that included a child's family, medical, educational and placement history, as well as, how all needs would be met for every child. DCFS is to report on the feasibility of implementing the Plan of Care.
2. DCFS shall consider the implementation of a negative outcome reporting system, whereby DCFS social workers report any problem, within 24 hours, to DCFS Administration that might impact the safety of the child and create potential liability for the County. DCFS is to report on the feasibility of a system such as the Department of Health Services format and protocol.

3. Every social worker is required to enter each case into a computer database. DCFS shall conduct an audit of this mandate. Please report on the feasibility of this proposed audit on September 9, with a proposed auditing tool and time frame of such an audit, in an effort to ensure that all children's records are properly entered into State-mandated computer systems.
4. Report on a quarterly basis to the Board, County Counsel, and the Risk Manager Inspector General any recurring risk management issues, such as inadequate documentation, in an effort to analyze and implement systemic changes to ensure the safety of children in every placement.

INTRODUCTION

On September 3, 2004, we requested a 30-day extension to provide a meaningful final quarterly report on the above directives. The Department has continued to move forward with methodologies to control and mitigate risk. The following report updates you on our methods for controlling risk and is being provided as the final report. In the future, the Department will be presenting the Semi-Annual Performance Report to the Board as the banner for improved child welfare services.

REPORT ON FOUR RISK MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

1. Currently, DCFS is to report back on September 9th their efforts to create a more efficient case file with an efficient file retrieval system. Please consider the model used at MacLaren Children's Center (MCC) where they utilized a Plan of Care that included a child's family, medical, educational and placement history, as well as, how all needs would be met for every child. DCFS is to report on the feasibility of implementing the Plan of Care.

As was previously reported, the Department has continued efforts to develop a model consistent with the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and that includes vital information such as that contained in the MacLaren model. Unfortunately, we have been unsuccessful in bringing a Plan of Care into fruition because the constraints of CWS/CMS have prevented implementation and we did not want to create a redundant data entry system for capturing the same information already entered into CWS/CMS. CWS/CMS is a State-owned system and is inflexible to individual county needs. The State is facing many high priority statewide changes such as Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) compliance, legislative mandates, and architectural design challenges to move toward a web-based environment. SACWIS is the federal reporting system for child welfare and without compliance, the State is disallowed from collecting Federal funds. We agree with the Board that the model is important because all of the medical, dental, educational, assessment, visitation and placement information and case plan goals for the family are documented by the social workers within the child's CWS/CMS case.

The challenge of pursuing the inclusion of a Case Summary Plan option, however, is that County-specific requests for changes to the system requires approval and prioritization through the CWS/CMS Oversight Committee and agreement by all of the counties. My staff has brought this issue before the Oversight Committee and we intend to submit a System Change Request for development of a Case Summary Plan of Care. Once the Committee and all counties agree to a change, non-emergent changes take two years or more to implement. This process is anticipated to take four to six years from Change Request to implementation but we plan to move forward, regardless. In the hope of expediting the procedure, I am requesting that the Board send a five-signature letter to the Governor of California asking the State to undertake the initiative of making the Case Summary Plan of Care a CWS/CMS priority. We would be willing to work with the State regarding legislation for additional resources.

In the meantime, we are continuing to move forward with an organizational tool aptly named MyCSW. The tool will allow the staff to organize their day-to-day case activities, view their caseload geographically and provide all caseload-related reports, specific to a social worker. MyCSW will assist timely compliance by providing alerts for upcoming case activities. The tool will be rolled out in phases with an anticipated phase 1-A completion date of January 2005 and continuing into the second half of that year. MyCSW will allow more time to be dedicated to protecting children and supporting families in Los Angeles County by providing a personalized home page of critical information needed by the CSW to meet goals, track case milestones and monitor CWS/CMS alerts.

The Department has adopted a performance-based methodology devoted to the health and safety of children and their families. We are utilizing structured and team decision-making and independent reviews to ensure that the Department is meeting the needs of children and their families. We have re-deployed staff from non-case carrying to case-carrying positions. Further, when a child is injured or dies under specific conditions, a team of departmental experts gathers to determine whether additional, reasonable policy or procedure could/would have impacted the outcome. Such experts include County Counsel; the Department's Medical Director, the Department's Risk Manager, the Critical Incident Section Manager and all staff associated with the child/family.

In the area of medical and mental health accomplishments, we have moved from a historically poor assessment system to one that allows children to remain safe at home. I have identified a number of sites that will be hubs for the children in Los Angeles County. The hubs will provide forensic evaluations on a full-time basis. The hubs will remain open 24 hours per day, seven days per week. I will be asking for Board support in this endeavor within two months. One of the sites that I have identified is County USC Medical Center. The other sites are based throughout the County to maximize utilization.

2. DCFS shall consider the implementation of a negative outcome reporting system, whereby DCFS social workers report any problem, within 24 hours,

to DCFS Administration that might impact the safety of the child and create potential liability for the County. DCFS is to report on the feasibility of a system such as the Department of Health Services format and protocol.

The Department has completed the final stage of development of the negative outcome reporting system known as the Critical Incident and Fatality Tracking system (CIFT). The pilot phase is drawing to a close and is approximately ninety percent efficient. The areas under revision are double entries, ad hoc reports and the inability to retrieve information fields between CIFT and CWS/CMS. However, we anticipate that these problems will resolve imminently and the system should be fully functional within a short time. In the interim, we continue to input all information regarding child deaths that aggregate from CWS/CMS for the purpose of tracking trends and compiling statistics. The data will be utilized to develop programs aimed at increased child safety.

3. Every social worker is required to enter each case into a computer database. DCFS shall conduct an audit of this mandate. Please report on the feasibility of this proposed audit on September 9, with a proposed auditing tool and time frame of such an audit, in an effort to ensure that all children's records are properly entered into State-mandated computer systems.

Under previous administrations, DCFS maintained a centralized audit staff. Rather than maintaining centralized administrative staff charged with the duty of auditing the Department, with re-deployment I have moved staff into the Service Planning Areas (SPAs) to ensure immediacy of results. The LAKids Intranet system contains sites, available to all DCFS staff, for the review of compliance with mandates. Safemeasures, a system designed by the Children's Research Center, mimics the State's audit protocol. This site was designed specifically for utilization by individual supervisors in each SPA. It is an excellent tool available to all staff and will assist with compliance. Further, there are additional sites on the Intranet that can be utilized to audit for compliance. The individual SPAs are monitoring compliance through a combination of the above tools, through weekly/monthly case reviews and other audit measures created by the SPAs. I firmly expect that the movement from centralization to SPA-based compliance audits will result in progressive improvements that are performance-based and create a healthy sense of competition within SPAs to achieve excellence.

4. Report on a quarterly basis to the Board, County Counsel, and the Risk Manager Inspector General any recurring risk management issues, such as inadequate documentation, in an effort to analyze and implement systemic changes to ensure the safety of children in every placement.

Between March and July 2004, internal investigations resulted in the substantiation of four cases of lack of documentation into the CWS/CMS database system. The Children's Social Workers and their Supervisors names have been forwarded to the

Department's Human Resources Division/Performance Management Section along with the results of the investigations.

The Department has been conversing with the Office of Independent Review, under Mike Gennaco's direction, for assistance with strengthening our internal investigative processes. We look to Mr. Gennaco for increasing our ability to conduct ethical investigations, protect individual rights and promote fairness in the investigative process while maintaining child safety and increasing public confidence in the Department. We are operating under the belief that Mr. Gennaco has brought a wealth of support to the Sheriff and that with their tutelage, our investigations will yield strength-based, competent results that hold up under Civil Service hearings.

Furthermore, the Chief Administrative Office's (CAO) Risk Management Branch has been assisting our risk management efforts from both a fiscal and systemic angle. The CAO has consistently attended our Litigation Roundtables. These Roundtables are conducted within six months of the assignment of lawsuits to counsel. Present at the Roundtable are representatives from County Counsel, contract counsel, third party claims administrators, CAO, the Department's Risk Manager, my deputy directors, administrators and others, as appropriate. The goal is to critically analyze the lawsuit, develop appropriate defenses and to create risk mitigation techniques. The CAO has committed to assisting the Department in loss prevention stemming from litigation. Further, they are assisting our Human Resources Division/Health and Safety Section in identification of and eradication of occupational precursors to Worker's Compensation claims. With the assistance of the CAO, we have begun a series of Claims Status Review meetings with our Worker's Compensation third party claims administrators. These meetings will be held on a regular basis to reduce the number of old claims. Our Health and Safety staff is providing Ergonomics training and is attending Loss Prevention training. With the assistance of the CAO, the staff will be looking at systemic changes that can be utilized to prevent recurrent dangerous behavior.

DCFS SEMI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

On August 11, 2004, I presented the DCFS Semi-Annual Performance Report to you. The report details the Department's outcomes targeted for improvement throughout the year and the measures that support them. The report is comprehensive and is in accordance with the County's Strategic Plan Goal No. 5: To improve the overall wellbeing of children and families in Los Angeles County. I believe that within the Semi-Annual report a detailed accounting exists regarding the issues above. Therefore, I am attaching a copy of the report to this update.

The Semi-Annual report names three specific goals. These goals are as follows: Increased safety for children in our care; improved timelines to permanency; and, reduced reliance on detentions. Further, I have devised seven measures to support the goals. These measures will enable us to reach each goal in specific, outcome-

oriented ways. By utilizing these measures, we expect to decrease risk to children in out-of-home care.

Over the past seven months we have lessened the occurrence of abuse and/or neglect in out-of-home care by over 40%. The median length of stay in out-of-home care has decreased by 8%. Further, we have decreased the number of children in care by 10% and new entries into care has decreased by 14% in the past year.

Historically, the Department measured its performance in non-specific terms. We have moved into an era of performance-based contracts. These contracts will enable us to keep children safe by expecting contractors to maintain measurable levels of compliance, if they expect to continue to receive funding. Further, we are expecting our managers and staff to meet specific goals and are utilizing our Intranet for the dissemination of statistics that evaluate the SPAs' effectiveness. My deputy directors meet on a regular basis to discuss the results and are focused on strength-based programs within the SPAs.

We have requested a waiver of the Federal Title IV-E funds. If allowed, the Department will expand its services in strength-based, family-centered, child-focused and community-based programs. This will truly envelop families with additional services within their home boundaries. It is my expectation that while children will remain at home to a greater degree; safety factors such as additional home-based services will allow recidivism to decrease. The waiver is one method to protect abuse-impacted families.

SUMMATION

To summarize, management of risk to abuse-impacted families in Los Angeles County will be achieved through the use of various models and methodologies. Such models include: performance-based contracts; the Federal Title IV-E waiver; reduction of caseloads through redeployment; collaboration with law enforcement and other community services; structured and team decision-making, improvements within the Critical Incident and Child Death Review process; medical and dental health hubs; point-of engagement; various permanency models; peer review processes, interagency risk management and many more exciting innovations. A more detailed road map is presented in the August 11, 2004 Semi-Annual Performance Report.

The Department is appreciative of the efforts of the Board in assisting us to bolster strength-based practices while minimizing risk to the constituents of Los Angeles County. Unless otherwise notified, this report will be the final Risk Management Report. The Department will continue to notify the Board of critical incidents and child fatalities in the regular manner and we will continue to provide performance reports on a semi-annual basis.

Each Supervisor
December 16, 2004
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If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may call Helen Berberian, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

DS:mv

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
 Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
 County Counsel
 Risk Manager Inspector General